

NETRALIA

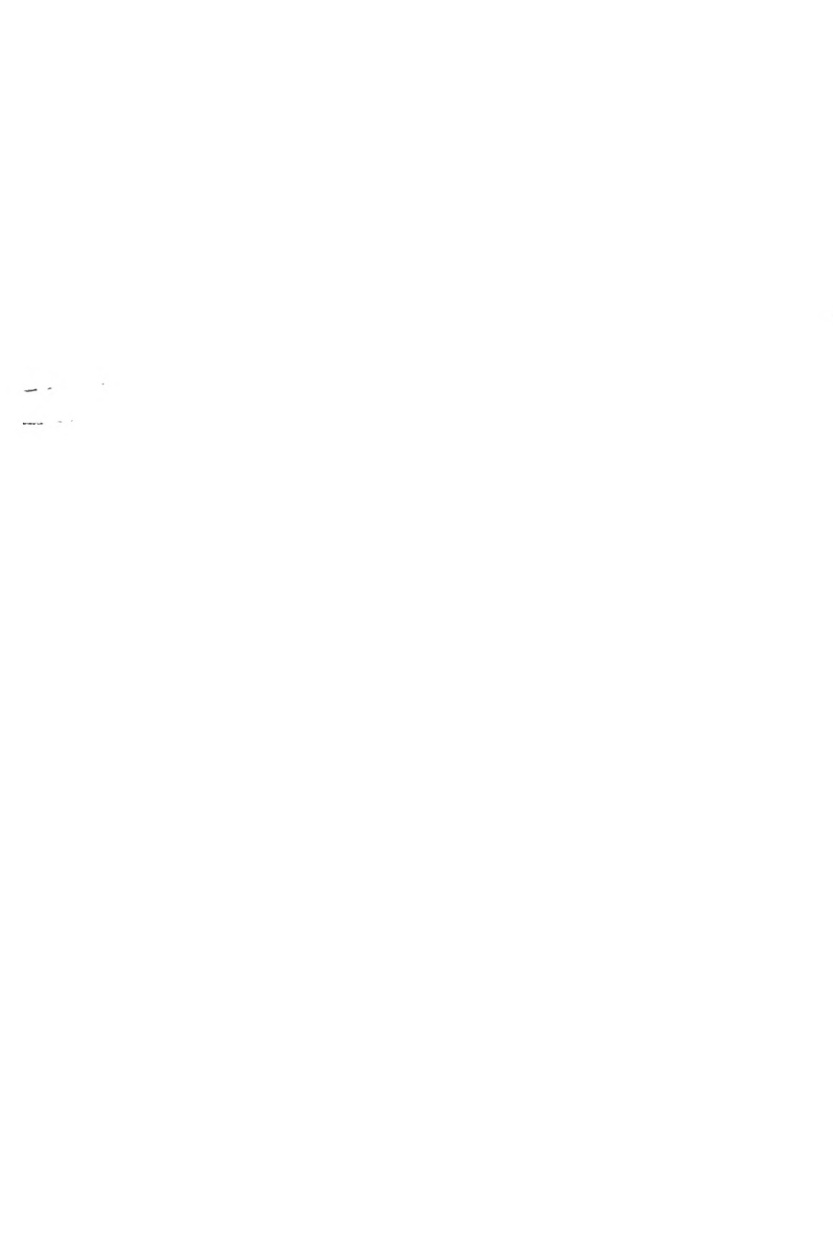
SYDNEY JEPHCOTT

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PENETRALIA

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The Author wishes to acknowledge the courtesy of the "Bulletin" Co. in permitting the re-publication of "The Dreamers," "A Song of the Tent," etc., in this volume.

PENETRALIA

By
SYDNEY JEPHCOTT

MELBOURNE
THOMAS C. LOTHIAN

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THE DREAMERS

v

THE DREAMERS

HAVE courage, O, my comradry of dreamers !
All things, except mere Earth, are ours.

We pluck its passions for our flowers.

Dawn-dyed our great cloud-banners toss their
streamers

Above its quaking tyrant-towers !

Making this stern grey planet shine with jewel-
showers.

Our lives are mantled in forgotten glory,

Like trees that fringe yon dark hill-crest

Alight against the molten west.

The great night shuddering yields her stress of
story—

The dreams that stir the past's long rest—

Strange, scented night-winds sighing on our naked
breast.

Through all the spirit's spacious, secret regions—

By pathways we believed unknown—

Still thoughts immortal meet our own.

Ideas !—In innumerable legions !

Like summer's stir in forests lone

Their various music merges in time's monotone.

The dreamer sees the deep-drawn ore-veins brightening

Through all the huge blind bulk of Earth ;

He led the ship around its girth ;

He plays, as on the pulses of the lightning,

The song that gives its workings worth.

The song foredoomed to bring man's morrow to the birth.

Base, base mere doers, blind and dreamless ;

Whose bodies engines are of toil !

Greasy with greed and lust they moil ;

They cast lots for the dreamer's garment seamless,

To rot among their useless spoil ;

The fathomless infinity their breath does soil.

Hail to the dream that roused the sleeping savage,
And led him from his bloody lair,
Across light's bridge, that single hair,
Above th' unpurposed, eyeless hell of ravage
That, beasts and men, the soulless share,
And left him, waking in thought's temple, Heaven's
heir !

Our souls, in these vast Heavens un beholden
Of eyes, our angel-hopes embrace ;
Or being's shining trail retrace,
Through pregnant skies about our forms enfolden
In rapture of our kindred race,
Until the gaze of God consume us, face to face.

Ah, God ! In what undying dream of beauty
Wrought Thou our world, so strange and fair,
Afloat in Thy illusive air ?—
Ay me ! We know that dreaming is our duty !
These dreams more intimate than prayer ;
For in Thy dream divine our laureate spirits share.

PROSERPINE
TO
PLUTO

PROSERPINE TO PLUTO

A GAIN I lose my life beneath Earth's skies so
sweet—

The flocks, the kine with steeds among them
strayed,

The harvests to the threshing-circle laid,
Grape-girls with smooth swift pace of naked feet
(Like cloudlets' shadows o'er the wavering wheat)

Until their sunlit bosoms gain the shade,

The peaks, the shores, with azure gulfs embayed,
The vivid cities and the sea-ward fleet

Fade out—in darkness Thou dost make divine !
With Thine immortal nectar, O, recruit me,

Quenching the savour of Sicilian wine !

No shameful human evils here we pine.

Great ghosts, new-fall'n round Ilium, salute me.

Thou art more great always—and Thou art mine !

THE
GOLDEN
BEE

THE GOLDEN BEE

BETWIXT the piercing petals of the stars I
gather honey ;

From blood on earth dark-spilt ;

From streets and seas, from stormy night and
summer sunny ;

From good and guilt ;

Out of the ribs of lions desert-dead in ages olden ;
From dewy lips alive,

Athwart untraversed skies I strive with tribute
golden

To eke our hive.

Thro' dreamlands undiscovered drift ; on beauty's
bosom

Lie tranced in listening,

As my soul-sister butterfly within yon blossom
With wary wing—

Veiled, veiled in vain with smiling silence, Maiden !—

Thy heart's desire I drain !

Till stung by anguish of thy tear I fly forth, laden

With sweetest pain.

I linger in the perfumed Past, afar out-trailing

Behind Earth's flying orb ;

Or, down the path our Future follows swiftlier

sailing,

God's hopes absorb.

THREDBO RIVER

THREDBO RIVER

SUMMER, like a dread disease,
Whelms the world in sultry shine ;
From Hell's mouth the mocking breeze
Troubles all the swooning trees—
Heart o' mine ! O, heart o' mine !—
'Mongst those mountains now to roam ;
Cooling thy fever in the foam—
In the foam of Thredbo River !—
Thredbo River pouring down to Jindabyne !

O, the weariness, the fever,
Burning, barren heart o' mine !
O, to lie, my heart ! alone ;
Just a smooth, enduring stone
In the Thredbo's deepest pool,

Packed with plunging waters cool.
Where light's shadowy arrows shine !
Cold and old grey boulders,
Shoulders leaned to shoulders,
Baffling back white waters eager
That their heavy breasts beleaguer—
Torrents white of Thredbo River—
Thredbo River roaring down to Jindabyne !

WHITE PAPER

WHITE PAPER

S NOWY-SMOOTH beneath the pen—
Richest field that iron ploughs ;
Germinating thoughts of men ;
Tho' no heaven its rain allows.

There they ripen, thousand-fold ;
And our spirits reap the corn,
In a day-long dream of gold—
Food for all the souls unborn.

Like the murmur of the earth,
When we listen, stooping low,
Like sap singing nature's mirth
Foaming up the trees that grow,

Evermore a subtle song
Sings the pen unto it, while
Fluid idea flows along,
Each new Era's mother-Nile.

Greater than ensphering Sea,
For it holds the sea and land ;
Seed of every deed to be
Down its current borne like sand.

* * * *

I caress thy surface sheer,
Holding thee the Absolute ;
Where the things to be inhere,
Waiting their material bruit.

How I love thee ! my heart's blood
Were too dull to smutch thy white !
I'll aver : no lily's bud
Lays such unction on my sight.

Suave of maiden's throat or arm,
Bliss embodied to the touch,
Has not such ambrosial charm—
Not a marble Goddess such !

Dear White Paper ! All To-day
Palpitates with spirit-heat—
Only on thy whiteness may
Seers translate its rhythms sweet !

Holy Paper ! all the Past
Were a rack of ruined cloud
Stripping from our orbit vast,
But thou Eternity endowed

With an actual soul of speech—
Life of life by death distilled—
That all dateless days shall reach,
As life's vine of veins is filled.

O, the glorious Heavens wrought
By Cadmean souls of yore
From pure element of Thought !
And thy leaves their silvern door !

Light they open, and we stand
Past the sovereignty of Fate ;
Glad among Them, still and grand,
The Creators and Create !

A
DREAM
THEME

A DREAM THEME

THE darkness breathes with being—
Life's least of things alive,
Such prisoned passions strive !
The huge bright stars unseeing
Peer o'er Earth's throbbing hive.

Led by no clue I wander
Through redolent garden-gloom,
Where ghosts gigantic loom.
When thro' blind blackness yonder,
Like some new, weird perfume,

The faintest foreign singing !
No word I know thereof.
But know its burden—Love !
Low ! liquid-low, yet stinging ;
Like that night-bird's which strove,

The piercing thorn brave-breasting,
For his great song to gain
The magic dyes of pain ;
Un-rising and un-resting
Flows, glows that secret strain.

“ O, voice of night,” I murmur,
“ Let not a mortal know
There is such love and woe ;
Life’s film we tread the firmer
Unheeding aught below ! ”

In the song’s swoon ensuing
I feel a presence come ;
And wait its touch all numb—
The viewlessness hard-viewing,
Drinking expectance dumb :

Then hands—how soft and slender !—
Find me, and clasp and cling ;
And, like an angel’s wing
Slow-waved, a bosom tender
Thrills me, deep-shuddering :—

“ O, you who do not know me !
O, you I know too well !—
(Which of us weaves this spell ?)
What right had you to show me
Those dear red depths of Hell,

“ Where mortal bosoms bleeding
Teach God new laws of love,
All hope and joy above ;
And fuse from pain exceeding
Pure gold no fire can prove ?

“ And hateful heights of Heaven,
Where perfect Bliss stands proud,
Wedded in her white shroud
To Power no fear may leaven
With dearest Brotherhood ?—

“ Intolerable teaching !
The truth was ne’er to teach !
Smaller the scope of speech :
Refusal, or beseeching :
No Vortex void to reach ;

“ Truth’s far-off, fatal centre !
Round which all orbits run,
Our spirits, as our sun ;
But none may know or enter
Until Life’s circle’s spun.

“ Beyond the bounds of Being,
Best of all things to be,
Claim this far life of me ;
Seal, seal with kiss unseeing
What men unborn shall see

“ With worship, and with wonder
To find no pulse repeat
Their own heart-urgence sweet ;
Set more than Space asunder
When we tricked Time to meet ! ”

GREY
EYES

GREY EYES

GREY eyes, grey eyes, your twilit heavens unbar !
My spirit knew you when, an ancient star,
It swam in skies wherein that ageless grey
Was deepening to the earliest day.

O, star, dawn-drowned before Time's wheel yet
turned
The reeling worlds, in what blind gulfs has burned
Thy quenchless core, since Life and Death first
played
Their mighty masquerade ?

The passionate past, whose flames of joy and pain
Borne down in life's long storm still wavering wane
Along the horizon of eternity,
Its fervence has bequeathed to thee,

O, star, my Soul ! and thy primaeval power
Re-blossoms like some tropic evening-flower—
Sweet fever ! that I strive across strange skies to
 slake
In Love's grey, unforgotten lake !

Grey eyes ! Again your twilight heavens unbar !
Relume my soul, that long-extinguished star,
To shine, the centre of your being's bliss,
 Through all Night's infinite abyss !

A
SWAN
SONG

A SWAN SONG

FOLLOW, comrades ! and join our flying !
Crash into flight,

Jarring the night,

And scale the hollow, vast winter sky.

Above all danger, above all dying

Far we fly,

The very sky

Streaming in tenuous torrent by !

Overhead all the stars are shaken,

Tho' so far ;

Every star

Throbbing back to our beating wings.

Under us all the winds awaken,

Tho' so still ;

Heavy and chill

Under the strokes of our wondrous wings.

Lances of light that doubly darken

The deadly dark

Make us their mark !—

Swerve ! swerve, and still redouble our flight !

Passionate ! perçant ! dreadful !—hearken—

The curlew's scream

Spurting its stream

Out of the quivering heart of night !

Startle the eagles lonely sleeping

On pathless peaks

That sunrise seeks

While the world is smothered beneath in night !

Cloudlets across the heavens creeping

Eddy back

From our termless track,

Where lightnings are lost and the storms bleed
white !

Mist-like up-rolls the river's roaring,

Huge, huge and slow

From gulfs below—

Dissolving mist-like it rolls away

Among the night-winds, that slowly soaring,
Murmur wide
As the tide
That lifted our breasts in the dawn-lit bay.

Beyond the stars see the blue deeps brighten—
We shall soon
Meet the moon,
Sliding on with the eager sky.
We climb aloft till our wing-beats whiten ;
Then downward stream
Like souls a-dream ;
Or cloudy levels along we ply.

Toward us, trumpeting triumph, journey
Other swans !
Their response
Sounds like the song of a falling star !
Comrades unknown ! O, to us turn ye !
They are gone !
On and on !
Faint, fainter their voices, and very far !

O, comrades follow, and join our flying !

Crash into flight,

Jarring the night,

And scale the hollow, vast winter sky !

Above all danger, above all dying

Far we fly !

The very sky

Streaming in tenuous torrent by !

RED POPPIES

RED POPPIES

HEART'S own blossom,
Don't I know where the blood-red
poppies grow ?

Never bosom
Beat so chaste, but its wild poppies burned to
waste !

Longing, after longing
Thronging, thronging !—
Blood-red poppies, bitter-sweet, among life's pallid
wheat !

O, hearts insurgent !
O, storm-wings urgent !
O, poppies bruised and torn, among the angry corn !

“ Life and Beauty ! ”

“ Death and Duty ! ”

Mingles their refrain ; opiate with pain.

Ah, poison of those poppy-flowers,

That makes high Heaven ours !—

But holds always an inner spell to make that Heaven
Hell !

But O, Past insatiate !

O, Dreams forever dead !

Poppy-petals shed in boundless fields of sleep.

Where through lonely moon-rays reap

Forgetfulness and Fate !

O,
SWALLOW !

O, SWALLOW !

O, SWALLOW ! Swallow that sprang to life
 undying
From that mad mother's woe
In Daulis, long ago—
'Tis well forgotten, your child in the palace lying—
But what of the spirits you
In a younger Hellas knew ?—
Snow heaped on the heights of old for our souls'
 supplying—
How can you suffer the Spring
Since the children ceased to sing
Your Song, for gifts at a thousand doorways crying ?
Surely you hear them singing
Of you, white-breasted, bringing
The beautiful hours ; and Echo's voice shrilly
 replying
To their shrill cadence sweet
From each clear Ionian street ?

A
SONG
OF
THE
TENT

A SONG OF THE TENT

TURN out once more the weary cattle,
And shake the canvas fold from fold
Before the stars again embattle
Round Night's long-leaguered hold.

It rises in a roof, enclosing
Out of the wilderness the home ;
The home eternal, where, reposing
Our limbs grow glad again to roam.

Like snowy peaks along the dawning
The tents along Time's verges rise—
The Heroes rest beneath each awning ;
How near those still unconquered skies !

Before our elder brothers builded
Thebes' prison, or Persepolis
This ancient light of evening gilded
Our father's tent with freedom's bliss.

When palace church and fort are rotten—
All, all the haunts of slavery—
We'll roof with bonny web of cotton
The dear bride-bed of Liberty!

Night-long the canvas throbs, receiving
Each suspiration of the skies—
Tremors of terror, joy, or grieving,
Or unimagined mysteries.

The fireshine fluctuant, the lightning
That flicker thro' the tissue thin
Kindle allied emotions, brightening
Our shadowy souls awake within.

The floods of dear oblivion deepen—
Death still in sleep's disguise—
We drown in bland black billows, sweeping
The last star-arrow from our eyes.

The famished night-winds, blind and homeless,
Are fended from our slumbering souls ;
The canvas in soft ripples foamless
A safe sea-surface o'er us rolls.

And, O ! far in the night to waken !—
Far from realities of day ;
And watch those wells of darkness shaken
Still by star-strivings far way.

Or great dismantled moon arising
Turn writhing mists to white witch-fire ;
Or else our Morning-star, surprising
The heart of darkness with desire !

HOME
WOE

HOME WOE

THE wreckage of some name-forgotten barque
Half-buried by a dolorous shore ;
Whereto the living waters nevermore
Their urgent billows pour,
But the salt spray can reach and cark—

So lies my spirit, lonely and forlorn
On Being's strange and perilous strand ;
And rusted sword and fleshless hand
Point from the smothering sand,
And anchor chainless and outworn.

But o'er what deep unconquered and uncharted,
And steering by what vanished star,
Where dim-imagined consorts are,
Or hidden harbour far,
From whence my sails, unblessed, departed—

Can memory, nor still intuition teach.

And so I watch with alien eyes

This world's remote and unremembered skies ;

While round me weary rise

The babblings of a foreign speech.

HOW
BEAUTIFUL
UPON
THE
MOUNTAINS

.

HOW BEAUTIFUL UPON THE MOUNTAINS

I WAKE and meet the World, adorable with
Spring,

Leaving the purple palace of her night—

(Where Time sleep-walks in moon-light's dreams
divine)

Under the stained banners of dawn, athrob
Before fierce day, whose spears of keen-edged flame
Blaze broad above the incontestable east.

Far trails of tenuous cloud catch fire of gold,
And flare into white-shining ashes soon,

And soon the buoyant range-backs take sun-rise,
Illustrious with dolphin-change of hue

O'er gulfs submerged in shadow—lingering lees
Of gloom that flow in silent, waveless ebb

Out thro' the west. The firmamental forests blue
Mantling the mighty storm of mountains round
In desolate rune deplore, bright-diapered

By covert birds ubiquitous in song.
 Among that murmur, but unmingling, soars
 The murmur of the torrents lost below,
 In dreams respondent to far clamouring seas.

Not yet sunlight has searched those valleys veiled
 So deep withdrawn their lissome loveliness—
 And gracious as the magic snow of breasts
 That heave in virgin dreams of motherhood—
 Irradiate, now, their contours float
 The gloss of golden sward that clothes each curve
 Like robes of royal silk !—

Gazing beyond

O'er regions turbulent as mortal fate,
 That, fading as the tragic years in Time,
 Merge in faint mazes that still hide, yet are
 The lower world ; lost in Elysian haze,
 Mine eyes for anguish of too great a joy
 Turn from that boundlessness of beauty—Like
 Some billow swooping back into the womb
 Of waters from a surgy shore my soul
 Swoops home ; my veins with hateful heat are stung ;
 Intolerable tears mine eyelids shame :

O, Planet by thy minion, man, usurped,
 In absolute kingdom, with his mind's empire
 Sphered round of holy azure—visible Soul!—
 Where, proud corrivals of Titanian Thought,
 Ulyssean lords of Space their shoreless voyage
 hold :—

Life's brandished shield the Sun, and doom-rid Moon,
 Whose Judgment Day burned out before the Earth
 Had eyes, and round death's frontiers infinite
 The watch-fires of the dauntless host of stars—
 Amidst this indiscoverable dark
 Sun-litten stands the naked atomy ;
 And tremulous to the softest touch of air !
 It seems the maddest fantasy of some
 Crazed fiend that such poor shreds of flesh should
 own

This star-associate Earth ! Empyrean orb
 Of blazoned continents and oceans globed
 Around ten million islands ! Established throne
 Of all primordial Powers that won Existence.
 From anarchy of increate Elements
 Have moulded out the valleys' loveliness,
 Have piled aloft the mountains' majesty,
 The home-enhallowing hills, and ploughed

The sacred rivers quivering deep and cool,
 Unfolded, mystical as memory,
 Lowlands, laid ample as their sister-skies,
 Unfathomed main of sweet, maternal soil ;
 That yearns to yield its golden sands of grain,
 Wealth incomputable, around the isles
 Of spicy orchard-shade, all city-shrined ;
 Black valley mould gladdened with odorous grass,
 And uplands holy with their temple-trees !—

It cannot be that herb and tree should toss
 Such lightsome leaves, singing of growth within
 Their pores, and worm wide-searching rootlets down
 To suck each earth-grain's fine fertility
 With happy hunger, with thirst delicious drink
 Beneath the surface drought from deep-hid springs,
 And interweave, and hurry all their spoil
 Up to the sun-light if indeed the World
 Were owned by any men !—

The Universe throbs with far thunder : “ God ! ”
 The Being of Infinity.—But when,
 O, atomies ! did God stand forth and claim
 Such rights as these that madness yields to you ?—

To hold our plains, as wide as ocean, waste,
 Our dearest valleys void, the home unbuilt,
 The stream unused, the stunted State unfed,—
 Whiles, whiles the piteous people starve and die—
 And die more fortunate than those who live
 With barely life for life-long toil allowed.

“ SLEEPING
OUT ”

“ SLEEPING OUT ”

O WEARY walls ! leaving within two thousand
 years' futility
With one blind pace I win
The glad heights of the Oread,
The dark deliciousness of Hamadryad bowers,
All, all these unpermitted Powers, the tumult of
 whose tresses sweep
Thine iron carapace, Utility !

Sweeter than sleep, our pagan Paraclete,
More inward than most incommunicable dream,
This wide-winged wakefulness doth press
Against the stream of starry intimations,
Where thought to thought from ultimate severance
 caught,
Cohere in dazzling constellations ;
And æther throbs with human heat !—

The infinite puts off proportion in the night,
Bringing her brood of orbs beneath these trees
That yearn about me, with susurrant odours heaping
The traffic of the Odyssean breeze.

Dare I my spirit spend in sleeping
While the Universe unveiled goes by?—
Wer't not, indeed, to die?—
Lo, now!—My mountains lose their little moon,
Night reaches her oracular noon—
And shall my spirit, co-essential with those heavens
 darken,
Extinguishing the stars?—
What?—Shall the hours angelic pause and hearken
My soul's suspenses ; handing back the overbrimming
 boon
Of being through dispeopled night
And wait my waking by that mute Muezzin, light?—

And yet, between involvèd bars
Of sentience escaping, I sink into the silken shaping
Of ante-natal naught ; nursling of nescience again ;
And fond infinity is fain, once more,
Her liquid life along my blanched veins to pour.

NOON

NOON

I TAKE refuge in radiant air,
That thrills sun-satiate everywhere,
From the fulsome pressure of common fate ;
Passions earthy,
Wishes unworthy,
The bodily burden of despair,
Taint suspicion, and brackish hate—

Evaporate ! vanish away
In immeasurable scope of day
That breath creative, the bridal breeze,
My soul caresses
Till its dull distresses
Enchant into legions of fancies gay,
Sparkling aloft with the tossing trees.

But best of all that the mortal beast,
Defiling night with its evil feast,
Slinks out of ken to its inmost cave ;
Life's vexed clue straightens,
Great heaven greatens,
And over Thought's ocean, where shores have ceased,
As from God's lips wafted my spirit's a wave !

O, passionate blood of my morn, that dies
From the pure, perpetual skies !
O, Sun, consuming the necromancies of night !—
Age steeps me slowly,
Ageless and holy ;
And self, like a lense of pure crystal lies
Unseen at the centre of sight.

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